



EU DELEGATION IN BARBADOS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION – PRESS RELEASE

THE EU PROVIDES €740,000 IN EMERGENCY FUNDING TO SUPPORT PEOPLE AFFECTED BY LA SOUFRIÈRE VOLCANO'S ERUPTION

Bridgetown, 16 of April 2021 – The European Union (EU) has mobilized €740,000 (EC\$2.4 million) in emergency humanitarian aid to support those affected by the extremely damaging consequences of the La Soufrière volcano's protracted eruption in the small Caribbean island and developing state of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Explosive eruptions started on the 9th of April, prompting the local government to order an immediate evacuation of the most directly exposed areas. The pyroclastic flows descending downhill and the approximately 10km-high ash column, whose falling debris have covered villages, damaged the country's electricity grid and disrupted the water supply.

According to local authorities between 16,000 and 20,000 people have already been evacuated, with at least 4,000 of them currently living in temporary public shelters. The volcano's increasing activity has affected more than 110,000 people – almost the entire population of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – at a time when the country has been facing a dengue outbreak in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

“Our thoughts are with those who have been displaced, including those who have been left without clean water or electricity, due to the La Soufrière volcanic eruption. We announce this emergency funding that will support Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in their efforts to overcome this disaster, in the context of the challenging COVID-19 pandemic, which will target in particular support to the evacuees, access to clean water and sanitation. The EU stands

ready to step up humanitarian support for those in need in this urgent crisis,” said Malgorzata Wasilewska, Head of the EU Delegation in Barbados.

The emergency funding will be managed by the EU humanitarian aid department and implemented by humanitarian partners already active in the area. It will prioritize interventions to guarantee immediate access to water, sanitation, hygiene, healthcare and distributions of non-food items, in addition to the protection of the most vulnerable.

A sum of €190,000 will be channeled to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) through their Disaster Relief Emergency Funds. The Saint Vincent and the Grenadine’s Red Cross is supporting national authorities in coordinating and managing temporary shelters. Evacuees will receive hygiene kits, COVID19 personal protective equipment and the basic healthcare they need.

The remaining €550,000 will be channeled through humanitarian partners already active on the ground in order to enhance their response to the emergency.

Through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, on the 14th of April France has delivered 40 tons of first aid items such as COVID19 personal protective equipment, hygiene kits and drinking water.

In addition, the EU's Copernicus satellite service is currently providing maps of the area and the EU's 24/7 Emergency Response Coordination Centre is in close contact with local authorities to monitor the situation and eventually channel further EU assistance.

The current emergency has expanded beyond the sole Saint Vincent and the Grenadines also hitting the nearby island nations of Barbados – whose airport remains closed –, Dominica, St. Lucia and Grenada which are receiving a limited number of evacuees and are being affected by the volcano’s ashfall.

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